

Message Text

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51

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 EA-06 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

RSC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06

PRS-01 /058 W

----- 105005

R 091400Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 486

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

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1. PRIME MINISTER RIJAL DEPARTED KATHMANDU DECEMBER 31 FOR OFFICIAL VISIT TO TEHRAN, FOLLOWING WHICH HE PLANNED TO STOP IN PAKISTAN, SRI LANKA AND BANGLADESH. AFTER DEPARTURE EN ROUTE TO BANGKOK MFA HERE ANNOUNCED THAT TEHRAN VISIT HAD BEEN POSTPONED UNTIL JANUARY 7 FOR "SPECIAL REASONS" AND THAT PM WOULD WAIT IN BANGKOK AND SINGAPORE BEFORE MOVING ON TO PAKISTAN JANUARY 3.

2. ACCORDING TO REPORTS HERE PAKS EXPECTED HIM TO ARRIVE JANUARY 2 AND PRESIDENT BHUTTO SPENT TWO HOURS WAITING FOR HIS ARRIVAL THAT DAY AT AIRPORT. TO COMPOUND THE ERROR NEPALESE THEN LEARNED THAT SHAH WOULD BE ABSENT DURING RIJAL'S VISIT JANUARY 7-9 AND SCHEDULED STOPS IN BANGLADESH AND SRI LANKA WERE SCRUBBED.

3. COMMENT: NO ONE HERE IS WILLING TO ACCEPT BLAME FOR ERRORS IN SCHEDULING, BUT THERE IS CONSIDERABLE PRESS CRITICISM OF MFA WHICH, IT IS CHARGED, DID NOT EVEN HAVE OFFICIAL CONFIRMATION FROM TEHRAN THAT VISIT WAS APPROVED BEFORE RIJAL LEFT DECEMBER 31. FOUL UP ON DATES OF VISIT

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TO ISLAMABAD WAS APPARENTLY RESULT OF POOR COMMUNICATIONS

BETWEEN MFA, NEPALESE CONGEN IN BANGKOK AND EMBASSY IN ISLAMBAD. NET RESULT OF ALL THIS IS THAT RIJAL IS PERSONALLY EMBARRASSED AND PRESS IS CALLING FOR "CLEAN SWEEP OF THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR NATIONAL DISGRACE." IT IS OPEN SECRET THAT RIJAL WOULD LOVE TO DROP FOREIGN MINISTER FROM CABINET AND, INDEED, SOUGHT TO DO SO IN RESHUFFLE LATE LAST YEAR. PROBLEMS WHICH WOULD BE CREATED BY CHANGING FOREIGN MINISTERS SHORTLY BEFORE CORONATION WILL PROBABLY SAVE FONMIN KARKI. HOWEVER PALACE IS ALSO REPORTED TO BE CONCERNED SINCE, ACCORDING TO ONE LOCAL JOURNALIST HERE, NO ONE EVEN KNEW WHERE RIJAL WAS FOR 28 HOURS (HE WAS IN SINGAPORE) WHILE FRANTIC EFFORTS WERE MADE TO CONTACT HIM.

4. ALTHOUGH ORIGINAL BASIS FOR SNAFU CAN BE TRACED TO RIJAL'S DESIRE NOT TO TRAVEL TO TEHRAN VIA NEW DELHI, THERE WILL NO DOUBT BE EFFORT TO ALLOCATE OFFICIAL BLAME ELSEWHERE, BUT THIS MUST AWAIT RIJAL'S RETURN TO KATHMANDU JANUARY 10. WOULD APPRECIATE TEHRAN'S AND ISLAMABAD'S COMMENTS ON VISIT.
QUAINTON

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